MUSIC:

THE KEY TO CONTEMPORARY MARKETING

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## CONTENT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

### INTRODUCTION 5

- RATIONALE & RELEVANCE 5
- RESEARCH AIM 6
- RESEARCH QUESTION 6
- SUB QUESTIONS 6
- METHODOLOGY 6
- LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH 7
- REPORT STRUCTURE 8

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 10

- GLOSSARY 10
- INTRODUCTION: VALUE ADDING THROUGH MARKETING 11
- THE POSTMODERN MARKET 12
  - Characteristics 12
  - Aspects of Postmodern Consumers 15
    - Symbolic Meaning 15
    - The Emergence of Consumption Communities 16
  - Postmodern Marketing 18
    - Postmodern Marketing and Branding 20
    - The Postmodern Market: Conclusion 21
    - Limitations of the Postmodern Marketing Concept 21
- THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC AND CONSUMER 23
## ANALYSIS: MUSIC AS A BRAND MARKETING TOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCALE OF MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAND MARKETING APPROACH</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist &amp; Music Culture Association</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Introduction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTIST CHOICE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Way Communication</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CONCLUSION

Page 45

## APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Interview: Nike PR Manager</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Interview: Nike Brand Communication Director</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Interview: Converse Marketing Operations Lead</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Music as a Brand Marketing Tool: Collection of Case Studies</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REFERENCES

Page 60
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research paper was created with the aim to find out how companies can add value to their product or service scope through the use of music in marketing. It is based on the concept of postmodern marketing, which entails that purchases are made on emotional desires that originate within the consumers’ social environment rather than through functional benefits. Companies will therefore have to brand their product offering in order to represent a socially relevant and aspirational image, which ultimately allows them to differentiate themselves within even higher price segments.

The postmodern take on this subject has led to the result that a universal approach can not be outlined as all of the cultural circumstances surrounding the brand will have to be taken into account. Due to the idea of a consumer oriented market place underlying this concept, emphasis is to be put on the socio-cultural research that will have to be conducted when developing a brand marketing strategy.

For the creation of a music based marketing plan, a company will have to consider the following dimensions: The scale of musical involvement, the applied brand marketing approach, the artist choice and the communication channels. Artists will have to be chosen based on similarities between the existing image of the brand and the artist, rather than on the music genre. This will give the brand the option to become associated with the artist in order to create brand equity. The introduction of ‘new’ artists to the audience would on the other hand provide the option of a more explorative branding process, which would be shaped by consumers, and often times be perceived as more authentic. Both approaches should be communicated interactively through events or via social networks, while one way communication through advertisements etc. ought to serve as a reminder of the brand image. After all, to maintain the brand value through social relevance, the company will have to commit to the strategy over a long period of time, and communicate it through as many different and original channels as possible, while being cautious to social trends and changes within its customer base.
INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE & RELEVANCE

The contemporary marketplace is characterized through an extensive saturation of different product and service offers, of which plenty are of the same category. Additionally, globalized production processes have triggered an immense offer on lower priced products that serve the same purpose as their more expensive counterparts. Therefore, it has become increasingly difficult for companies to distinguish themselves through the product or service itself, emphasizing that innovative brand marketing and communication has become a critical success factor. Besides the need for improved marketing strategies, consumers are becoming increasingly resistant to those due to an over-stimulation of advertising content from diverse sources.

Music has been used to support various areas of marketing presumably ever since modern media have evolved, and with that the emergence of mass advertising. When mentioning the word music in relation to brand marketing, one of the usual associations would also be to think of the music played in adverts, as this support has become just as common as advertising itself. Given that nowadays it is increasingly difficult for a brand to differentiate itself through ordinary marketing approaches, more and more brands have started using music and its wider cultural framework in order to communicate their brand or to connect with their customers. This research will explore the different brand marketing opportunities music and brand collaborations might bring with it and will therefore be of relevance especially for those companies that aim to differentiate their products or services through its specific attributes rather than through a lowered price point.
RESEARCH AIM

This research paper was created with the aim to find out if and how consumer goods and service companies can use music and its broader cultural context as a strategic marketing tool that adds value to its products or services.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the different factors that need to be taken into consideration for the development of a music based marketing strategy?

SUB QUESTIONS

How can marketing add value to a company’s products and services?

What is the relationship between music and consumer?

How is music applied in current marketing practices?

How does the choice of a specific music based marketing approach support according marketing goals?

What are the measurable impacts of different music marketing approaches?

METHODOLGY

In order to find out how marketing can add value to the attributes of a commercial goods or service company I examined recent marketing theories, keeping in mind the cultural essence of the subject in order identify the framework that would validate the rationale the paper is based on.
In addition to that, the information on consumers’ relationship to music, as well as suitability of marketing tools for specific goals is obtained through qualitative research methods. In approach of the topic, information was gathered through unstructured participant observation, including the attendance of marketing initiatives based on music, the involvement in according social media communities and direct observation of the subject within online communities, as well as at physical settings. Additionally, results are based on secondary sources of information, taken from on- and offline media channels, as well as conversations with industry professionals. All the data on how music can be used as a marketing tool was eventually consolidated into one table in order to identify similarities, and different pillars of an approach. Due the educational context of this research paper is here centred around but not limited to apparel, footwear and accessories brands.

To find out how these approaches could impact the company an inductive approach was used, which is here based on a profound analysis and comparison of the multiple cases, and an assessment of those against the theoretical framework. Supportive information for this analysis is given by multiple sources of primary and secondary information. Structured interviews with industry professionals were held and secondary data sources that include writings of specialized on- and offline outlets were used in order to get an in depth understanding of the background of the subject.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

**Subjectivity of the topic**

Like with many cultural objects, the topic music is culturally interpreted and subjectively understood based on personal knowledge and experience, which means that terminology used could be interpreted slightly differently than intended. This is related to terminology used throughout information gathered through primary, as well as secondary sources, and ultimately the analysis that the research is based on. As different understandings of terms
such as “niche music culture” are inevitable, the findings will be demonstrated as descriptive and objective as possible.

In relation to the sensitivity and subjectivity of language used, personal experience and observation with the field of research will naturally be underlying of the analysis of the findings. This includes the limitations of personal bias, as well as interpretation of findings within a socio-cultural context.

Context of the Cases

Even though a higher quantity of cases was examined in order to draw up general conclusion, the wider cultural context in which each of those have occurred could inconceivably influence the results of the analysis. In addition to the cultural aspect, each of the marketing approaches analysed are highly dependent on differing company specific goals and objectives. Therefore general tendencies can be illustrated, but due to the differing circumstances of those, universally valid inferences cannot be drawn up.

Limitation of Corporate Insights

Corporate company information coming from both primary and secondary sources is limited to non-confidential information and might not reflect on the full picture of the topic.

STRUCTURE

With the purpose of clarifying the subject of research, the first part of the paper will consist of definitions of terminology used throughout the text. The compilation of definitions mainly consists of those terms that are either key aspects of the research aim and those that might be interpreted differently depending on the context.
To build up on the definitions, crucial terms will be illustrated further within a theoretical framework. This theoretical framework is based on those ideas and concepts that correspond the most to the research subject. In order to avoid superficiality within the further analysis of the topic, the origin of the concept used, as well as all aspects on how it has affected the marketplace will be described in depth.

To close this part, I will draw up a relationship between music, marketing and the theoretical framework and suggest propositions that will reflect the vast extent of the theoretical concept and that will not limit a further exploration of the topic from various angles.

Based upon implications given in the theoretical framework, I will describe several cases in order to offer conclusively substantiated interpretations of the case analysis to the reader. This part is divided into the four different areas that were identified as those different dimensions that require attention in order to answer the initial research question, during the examination of all the cases.

Within the conclusion statements that suggest a response to the research question using the thorough analysis of the previous section, will be formulated.
Especially in regards to the sensitivity of the limitations of the qualitative research, a common understanding of terminology used throughout this report is crucial. The definitions are based on a reconciliation of different interpretations found throughout the research process and the attempt to reduce them to its most objective essence.

**Branding:** Branding can be described as the process in which an image is given to a company or its products or services, represented through symbols such as the logo of the brand. Branding could occur through the intents of the company, an image ascription of the consumer, or as in most instances a merge of both.

**Fashion:** Fashion is defined as “a style that is popular at a particular time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014) and is often times reduced to apparel, footwear, accessories and beauty supply brands. Usually a distinction is being made between a “fashion brand” and the condition of being “fashionable”, where a “fashion brand” is in most cases seen as equal to apparel, footwear and accessories vendors, while being fashionable usually implies a coherence with current social and/or aesthetical trends.

**Image ascription:** The socially acknowledged image an object (i.e. a brand/product/service) represents in its environment, which was accidentally or purposely assigned by an individual or a group that have consumed this object.

**Marketing:** Marketing generally stands for the intent of a company to encourage consumers to buy its product. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014) How this intent is mapped out depends on different models of understanding of the concept of marketing. A more specific definition of the understanding of marketing throughout this research is given within the theoretical framework.
Music: Music itself is defined as an arrangement of sounds that is produced by instruments, voices and, or digital tools. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014) Within this context however it will be used as a term that describes not only the sound itself, but the sources of the sound production, such as the artist itself, as well as its cultural classifications. This will be further illustrated throughout the text.

Music classification/Music genre: A system in which terms for categories are used to identify songs with a similar pattern of sounds and tools used. Examples would be rock, pop or hip-hop music. Even though most of these terms are universally used, the categorization of a song to a certain classification or genre depends on the perception and understanding of the beholder.

Value: Value can stand for the worthiness of an object, which will be dependent on subjective discernment of the beholder. There are different types of value, depending on its context, which will be illustrated further throughout this paper.

INTRODUCTION: VALUE ADDING THROUGH MARKETING

In order to find out if, and how music can be used as a marketing tool that will add value to the company’s commercial items, it is crucial to understand if, and how value could be created through marketing in general and what adding value means. Universally accepted business definitions of “adding value” to a product or service describe this as an incident in which enhancements are given to the consumable item prior to offering it to customers, in order create a greater perception of worthiness, and to distinguish oneself from the competition. (Investopedia, 2014) Ultimately, adding value to a product ore service will allow the firm to sell those at a higher price point as they are to a subjectively perceived extent considered superior. This value addition that is commonly understood as part of the marketing process, can be of tangible nature, such as product packaging or presentation, but also be immaterial, as already indicted in the definition that supposes that value is based on perception. With regards to music as a cultural phenomenon, the
following will thus be based on the addition of immaterial assets that could add value to the company’s product or service scope.

When taking different contemporary marketing theories into account, the concept of postmodern marketing stands out as centred around the creation of intangible assets that are utilized to market a company, which is why it seems to be the most appropriate approach to base the research on how music could be used as a marketing tool on. Furthermore, the idea of postmodernism can serve as a source of reference when looking at the current cultural context and entailing consumer preferences. In order to understand this idea and with that the relevance of music for marketing, the following part will look at what postmodernism is, how it shapes consumer culture, and what this means for marketing.

THE POSTMODERN MARKET

Characteristics

The fundamental framework of postmodernism plays an important role when it comes to an understanding of the concept of postmodern marketing. This concept has found its origin in the late 1960’s/early 1970’s to describe cultural, political and social movements. Those are said to have arisen as a response to increasing negative associations with “modernity”, characterized through “rational science, universal laws, and absolute truths”. Postmodernism therefore describes a paradigm shift towards less restrictions and more freedom in action and theory. Validating a number of definitions of postmodern conditions, Brown (1992) describes those as scattered reality, a critical way towards the existing, acceptance of limitedness of knowledge, and the lack of an urge to impose utopian realities such as religion.

Other researchers that have been studying the phenomenon of postmodernism extensively are Firat & Schultz (1997), who have named ten different circumstances that characterize
the postmodern state. The following represent those ideas that will be most relevant for the further content in regards to music and consumption:

1. **Openness/Tolerance**
   This refers to awareness of the existence of diverse behavioural patterns and viewpoints, and thus cultural, religious or social differences, and an entailing acceptance of those. This is also reflected in the way communities are formed.

2. **Paradoxical Juxtapositions**
   This stands for the idea of the current state in which, according to Umberto Eco (1986) “anything goes”, and in which individuals intentionally or unconsciously experiment with opposing ideas and ideologies, and thus ultimately create something new. In music for instance, mixing electronic beats with rock guitars in an unfamiliar way would be an example, while in fashion cross-matching private label clothing with designer handbags, would offer another common one.

3. **Fragmentation**
   The condition of “Fragmentation” is related to a disappearance of “meta-narratives”, which has been replaced by a number of different perspectives and life styles an individual can follow at the same time. Ways of living are less generalized, but instead described as a ‘bricolage’ of many different approaches at the same time. This involves a lack of commitment to specific beliefs or behavioural patterns, which is also reflected in consumerism.

4. **Decentring of the Subject**
   “Decentring of the Subject” represents the thought that less emphasis in our contemporary culture is put on the subject, and the idea of a growing acknowledgement towards an objectification. This means that traits are associated with an individual due to the product he/she consumes, and that this product is the crucial factor when it comes to the evaluation of others. Furthermore, the purchasing of a product or service has become the equivalent to purchasing an identity. (Gabriel & Lang, 1995)
5. Reversal of Consumption and Production

According to Firat and Schultz, production is what has created value for a product or service, and thus the consuming society in modernity. Contrary, in postmodernism, manufactured goods are considered commodities and solely given meaning during the post-purchasing process by the way people use it. Looking at for instance apparel, the image that is given to a piece of clothing by its wearer(s) is more essential than the actual garment, which is fundamentally a piece of fabric, and especially in fashion, many times not only produced to serve a certain function, but also to deliver an aesthetic that corresponds to existing images. However, it needs to be mentioned that the meaning given to the products differs culturally. Lonsdale for instance is a brand that in the Netherlands is usually associated with “Gabbers”, an electronic music subculture that expressed their affinity by wearing the brand’s jackets. As this movement did not gain as much popularity abroad, most people from other nationalities are likely to have differing connotations to the product.

6. Emphasis of Form/Style

This condition describes the increasing preferences of visual aesthetics over the content itself as the result of the society’s vast media exposure. We can see its consequences in for instance in the growing usage of micro-blogging platforms such as Instagram or Pinterest.

7. Acceptance of Disorder

As described within several approaches, the postmodern discourse involves, and even embraces an acknowledgement of chaos as the normal state of reality. Diesel for instance is a brand that has picked up on this tendency with the brand identity it is aiming at sell, and campaign slogans such as “Be Stupid”, purposefully featuring models in arbitrary and meaningless situations (e.g. a high heeled women reading a magazine standing in her kitchen, next to a bear that is browsing through the fridge). (Gianatasio, 2010)
Aspects of Postmodern Consumers

Postmodern circumstances such as “Reversal of Production and Consumption”, as well as “Decentring of the Subject” (Firat & Schultz 1997) already allude to a paradigm shift of the reasoning behind consumerism, as well as to a strong interrelationship of consumerism and cultural and social dimensions. Within this context, several postmodern theorists such as Baudrillard (1981) are referring to the term “Symbolic Meaning”, which they claim to be the driver behind postmodern consumption and therefore what creates value for a brand.

Symbolic Meaning

Looking at the term itself, it can be said that “meaning” stands for the message a source conveys to a person that is exposed to the source, while “symbolic” denotes that this meaning is, often indirectly, represented by an object. (Sanchez, 2102) Trying to analyze symbolism remains a complex idea, which has been tackled mainly by semiotic studies with results that line out how different symbols relate to each other. The origin and tangibility of what those symbols actually represent however remains cryptical and subjective. Nevertheless, meanings can be described as theoretical constructs that are formed socially without any lucid reasoning behind their formation and that are working on a subconscious level. At the same time, being socially constructed, symbols are not static, but constantly re-defined on this social, as well as personal level. (Elliott, 1997)

From a postmodern perspective, this is highly relevant for consumption as consumer goods are carriers of symbolic meaning that is generated in a social context and at the same time consumption choices are made according to the relevance of the meaning to the consumer. (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978) Within this context, consumer goods and their inferring meaning serve two purposes for their buyers: Creating an identity towards the social environment, which is called “social-symbolism”, and creating a identity for one own, which is called “self-symbolism”. (Elliott, 1995)
While consumed products serve as means of recognition and also generalization for outsiders, individuals are at the same time free to construct their own identities by making unique, “fragmented” purchasing choices. While various ideas are being communicated through the media or the direct, social environment, fragments of each are being imitated, which is what creates one’s own, unique self – a bricolage of diverse symbols. (Elliott, 1997) The creation of one own’s set of social-, as well as self-symbolism is a constant process as, especially due to the non-static nature of symbols, those never entirely fulfil individuals, which makes the acquisition of new products even more desirable. (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994)

The meaning is given to a product itself through the image its brand is selling on the one hand and transformed by the people who buy them on the other hand. The brand image of course is dependent on its brand marketing and communication. Even the lack of a thought through marketing concept though will create a certain image, which might be an image of carelessness. However, the way consumers will use products for the creation of their own identity, especially in a social context, will highly impact the symbolic meaning of that brand. (Elliott, 1997) A strong influential factor in this process is mass media and popular culture. (Langman, 1992)

All in all, the creation of meaning for consumer goods is a complex process that brands have only partially control over. Constant communication through social interaction as well as mass-media increases the influence of consumers on the meaning the products convey – a process that is dynamic, interconnected, and idiosyncratically conceived. At the same time individuals have the urge to purchase perceived images, while simultaneously constructing new images through the use of consumer goods. Ultimately, consumerism can be considered a fundamental necessity when it comes to the construction of an individual and social identity.

The Emergence of Consumer Tribes

Another idea that stands out within speculations of postmodern consumption is that of the formation of micro-cultures, so called “consumer tribes” that has evolved from
postmodern sociology in the late 21st century. This approach is based entirely on the study of social interactions and how social groupings are formed, rather than on an analysis of individual motifs. Its framework includes important notions on how social life is influenced by consumer goods and service companies and vice versa, and thus significant insights on the changing purpose of brand marketing.

Consumer tribes, also called consumption communities, can be described as informal social networks that are linked through “shared emotions, style of life, new moral beliefs, senses of injustice and consumption practices”. (Cova, 1997) Moreover, consumer tribes are connected through “linking images”, which could be brands in the one case or a set of commodities in the other. (Maffesoli, 1996) Just like the previously described characteristics of a brand’s value for its consumers, “linking images” are carriers of symbolic meaning, just that in this instance those bring value to and shape the identity of the collective. The value that is here added to the community is known as “linking value”. (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007)

The following attributes can be identified when examining the importance of consumption for the formation of tribes (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007):

- Consumerism defines social interactions and “facilitates meaningful social relationships”.
- The symbolic meaning of commercial goods is prioritized over the item itself as it represents the social relationship of the grouping; this entails that the brand itself doesn’t have to have an iconic status in order to be of relevance.
- Linking images, and at the same time the glue value of the community emerges from shared experiences and emotions; those can be experienced on a physically joint, but also on a virtual level, which is especially occurring due to the widespread use of social media.
- As linking images are symbolic, meaning that they are non-static and recognized idiosyncratically, it is impossible to theorize those. Moreover, the existence of, or participation in a tribe is based on perception and emotion.
In correspondence to postmodern circumstances, consumer tribes can be described with the following characteristics:

- The participation in a tribe is temporary. It does not take over the individual’s lifestyle choices, but instead offers an alternative to the participant’s daily routine (Goulding, Shankar & Elliott, 2009). Furthermore, individuals can be active participants of several communities at the same time. (Bennett, 1999)
- Inferential of the multiplicity of community involvements and flexibility of identity is that a participation in a tribe neither requires long-term commitment, nor more deeply rooted beliefs. (Goulding, Shankar & Canniford, 2013)
- Consumer tribes are not only temporary for the individual participation, but also in their very own existence. Linked to the non-staticness of symbolic meaning, tribes transform or disappear as its members and their consumed products alter. (Goulding, Shankar & Canniford, 2013)
- Through the extensive amount of marketplace offerings and the lack of commitment to one single source consumer tribes enjoy freedom of choice when it comes to consumerism. In this manner, just as the postmodern consumer is said to influence the image of products and services by using them, tribes will modify and re-create market offerings. The stronger the linking value of a community is, the more likely communities will assign meaning to a product or service. (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007)

**Postmodern Marketing**

It can be concluded from the description of the postmodern consumer that the role of brands is to create desirable identities and to facilitate community building through consumer goods or services. (Wernick, 1991) At the same time, the postmodern market is considered fragmented, disordered and contradictory and consumer tribes, which might be a postmodern equivalent of a [modern] target group, are said to not necessarily share traditionally defined demographics or psychographics, such as age, gender, attitude etc.
(Goulding, Shankar & Canniford, 2013) Given those circumstances, market segmentation and an appropriate application of targeted marketing strategy in order to sell a product or service appears to be impossible. Thus, conventional marketing models appear not to be applicable for this framework. To state Brown in reference to concepts such as Porter’s Five Forces\(^1\). (1993): “Marketing conceptualizations are implacably modernist in orientation. They represent attempts – admittedly imperfect attempts – to make universal statements about marketing related phenomena”. All in all, one could say that postmodern marketing requires a change of paradigm through a less restricted way of thinking, which can only be based on speculations.

A critical success factor is that companies will have to be able to adapt fast to constant changes and movements in contemporary consumer culture, or else offer strong images that their customers could hold on to. At the same time those offerings will have to be relevant in a social context. Given the inconsistency of the consumer however requires marketing communication that will speak to its consumers in the moment of exposure to an image, (Firat & Schultz II, 1997) for example during an event where a consumer tribe would get together.

Due to the fact that consumers will base purchasing decisions on symbolic meaning, the context in which those are purchased will play an important role. In order for consumers to be able to relate to the product more intensively, both during purchasing and post-purchasing, an environment in which experiences can be made, and different images can be explored will give the company a competitive advantage over others, because the crucial symbolic meaning will be emphasized. An example would be the increasing number of different concept stores, e.g. Build-A-Bear for children, in which customers are exposed to the brand image through products, but also through an original retail environment, and sometimes even the involvement of the consumer. (Farfan, 2013) Experience marketing is vital when trying to tackle consumer tribes, as experiences, amongst others, are what symbolically define their linking value.

Another aspect that marketers will have to take into consideration is the involvement of emotions that dominates purchasing decisions. The perception of purchasing an image,

\(^1\) Framework for market analysis and strategy development.
and thus experiencing identity and/or belonging, will naturally involve a positive feeling for the customer, as well as connotation with the brand. The other way around, the need to pursue a certain image is also dependent on the current emotions and aspirations of that customer. As emotions are critical for the actual purchase, postmodern marketing studies often portray them as more substantial than demographics, lifestyles and beliefs. (Firat & Schultz II, 1997)

**Postmodern Marketing and Branding**

Given that consumers make purchases according to the perceived image of the item, branding could be seen as one of the most important elements of postmodern marketing. Branding however is not necessarily limited to brands selling a unified image, but could also refer to single products or services. (Firat & Schultz II, 1997) As described by Aaker (1991), branding in its essence constitutes of the creation of two main elements: brand identity and brand equity.

Brand identity can be defined as the image made up of brand values a company is aiming at representing on the one hand, and how those are perceived by consumers, on the other hand. For a successful implementation of a branding strategy within the postmodern framework, the relation to cultural trends, and coherence within the expressed identity are vital. As postmodern consumers are considered to be active shapers of the marketplace though, it is likely that brand identity will be re-defined through the use of the company’s offerings in a social context.

Brand equity can be considered as the value a brand symbolizes for its consumers, which stands for the subjective benefits it constitutes, as well as the reasoning to choose for this specific brand over a comparable one. In relation to postmodern theories, it could be said that the goal of branding would be to create brand equity that is socially relevant for its consumers, and thus support the formation of identity and/or communities.

It needs to be emphasized that branding is not limited to the creation of iconic brands or the over saturation of for instance the company’s logo use. It is solely based on the set of symbolic assets that is linked to the company’s name, product(s) or service(s). Symbolic
means that these assets are intangible and exist, as symbolic meaning generally does, only in one individual’s minds. (Lusensky, 2010)

The Postmodern Market: Conclusion

All in all, while in modernist strategies around market entry and generalized consumer targeting have dominated, postmodern marketing is almost comparable to social studies, in which understanding of “macro social forces and micro human behavior” should be the base for strategic decisions that will give companies a competitive advantage. (Firat & Schultz II, 1997) This further implies that purchases are not based on product or service choices, but rather on image choices, which means that within this framework the ultimate goal is not to merely sell a product, but primarily to sell the value of the brand.

Postmodern speculations serve as a good concept to illustrate how value can be added to a product or service through intangible assets, which could increase the market value of that product or service. However, the concept also indicates that companies have limited control over the value adding process, which is why different approaches will be explored and assessed their relevance within the marketplace throughout the research.

Limitations of the Postmodern Marketing Concept

Cultural Limitations

None of the different descriptions of postmodern circumstances specify whether the theory is limited to a specific cultural sphere. Even though ideas around postmodern consumers describe those as various micro-cultures in which demographics play a minor role, it seems likely that e.g. Asian Buddhist cultures might have different behavioural patterns. It seems like geography and an entailing culture, as well as potential strong religious beliefs are not considered within the theoretical framework, but at the same
time, given the examples used in the literature, it is to be assumed that the authors are mainly referring to “Western” and/or globalized cultures (meaning Europe, North America, and cities within emerging markets), which is what this research paper will therefore also be limited to.

**Intangibility & Vagueness**

Even though different postmodern circumstances are described much into depth, and at the same time the literature often times offers tangible examples, verbal expressions tend to be slightly vague. When explaining the phenomenon of “Reversal of production and consumption” for instance, Firat and Schultz (1997) refer to Aronowitz (1988) by saying: “The project of modernity clearly emphasized production as the worthy and meaningful activity in society; one of creation and usefulness.” In this example, it is questionable whether there is a universally understood definition of “meaningful”. Similar terminology is used extensively throughout existing research on postmodernism, which seems to leave room for the reader’s own interpretation, and decreases the palpability of the theory. This is why the analysis of the research will be based on the most accurate definitions, and at the same time might include subjectively understood terms that are used to describe phenomena within the theory.

**Contradictory Elements**

Given that some of the concept’s main attribute are for instance the “acceptance of chaos” or “paradoxical juxtapositions”, there are plenty of elements that contradict each other. Brand marketing as an example, some studies suggest that it is crucial to “sell identities”, while others suggest that brand marketers ought to leave room for consumers to construct meaning for the brand, which ultimately speaks for the absence of “one version of the truth”. Given that contradictory elements are what the idea is based on, the findings throughout the research will be analysed from different aspect, and through opposing ideas, which will have be reflected in the conclusion.
Acceptance Within the Industry

Even though postmodern marketing theory seems to have earned academic recognition, it is yet questionable whether industry professionals are actually using it, or are able to use it. Many brands appear to be picking up the idea, but most likely based on general market tendencies and not intentionally within this framework. This could be due to its incoherence, as well as the lack of strategic marketing approaches it has to offer, which makes it almost impossible for corporate use. Hereby, the following is supposed to serve as an indicator for how professionals could incorporate fundamental thoughts of the concept in developing a contemporary marketing strategy.

The Relationship Between Music and Consumer

As music within the previously described framework is after all a consumption item itself, it is to be understood as the symbolic meaning of the artist, a song or a music genre. However, different to other consumption items, it is a phenomenon that seems to be universally accepted and to represent a strong linking value for consumption communities. Therefore, in order to explore if, and how companies could make use of this as a brand marketing tool, the following will offer insights into the relevance of music within the contemporary consumption culture and introduce its potential opportunities for marketers.

Just like other consumption items, music will serve as an indicator of identity, which can be seen as a personal, as well as social reference point. Due to its ubiquity that also makes it easy for people to engage in conversations around it, music stands out through its especially strong symbolism. Depending on the extent of music consumption, this entails the creation of temporary social identities, and as people often times have connotations with personalities of a specific music type, the development of stereotypes. (Nuttall, Arnold, Carless, Crockford, Finnamore, Frzier & Hill, 2010) This way it works as a powerful identity driver and at the same time social connector. This has even been
intensified through the Internet, where social music platforms such as Spotify and Soundcloud are celebrating great successes and where music is shared via regular social platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to express one own’s state of identity. (Lusensky, 2010)

Music does not only serve as supportive for self- and social-symbolism, but can also be of high value for the creation of consumption communities. An example would be the Indie music festival crowd, analyzed by Cummings (2005) through Australia’s “Big Day Out”, which can be compared to various types of music festivals. The linking value of the community does not only exist through shared preferences, but is also strengthened through stimulating experiences made during the event and the feeling of escape of the everyday life.

When looking at the social consumption effects of music, it needs to be highlighted that there is a shift of motifs behind music consumption in which, as previously described, a lack of commitment is becoming more common for most cultures. “Punk” for instance could be representative for a culture that is characterized not only through shared consumption choices, but also through shared lifestyle choice and political dedication. As the framework highlights the “emphasis of form/style”, this seems to have become more relevant also for music consumption, and choices could thus be made rather arbitrary.

An example of how music consumption has changed over the years is delivered by Steve Stoute (2011), founder of advertising agency “Translation”, who was the initiator for e.g. McDonald’s and Justin Timberlake’s “I’m Loving It” collaboration, who illustrates the changing meaning of hip-hop music for consumers:

“A dog-whistle effect in the frontal lobes of youth everywhere. Ghetto and barrio kids would hear the stories of trailer parks and get it. Kids in affluent homes or in sleepy suburbs heard the call of generational despair and understood it. The commonality no longer had to be shared experience per se, but was about the linkage of feelings—all kinds of emotions that could be conjured by a thumping beat, rhymes, wordplay, anger, humor, arousal, resentment, boredom, joy…”

Furthermore he argues that the meaning for hip-hop has been shifting to a “pan-
ethnic sort of cool” (Greenburg, 2011) that could not be identified through demographic target segmentation. In other words, what in this instance would define hip-hop listeners is not the ethnic, cultural or social background, but simply put the experience made with the music itself at events or through the symbol of the artist.

The examples show how music as a social consumption item can be a carrier of symbolic meaning that consumers can easily understand and genuinely enjoy acquiring. Looking at the relevance of music in order to market brands that sell other items, it can be concluded that the symbolic use of music represents an opportunity to create brand equity by connecting the brand with consumer collectives. Music can here be seen as its own brand marketing channel that allows companies to reach a wider group of consumers through secondary channels. Furthermore, this implies that consumer groups can be identified through music as a shared consumption piece, which could enable marketers to classify consumer groupings through their musical affiliation and thus shared value(s).
ANALYSIS: MUSIC AS A BRAND MARKETING TOOL

INTRODUCTION

Taking into consideration that music can act as a connecting item between consumer and brand, it is critical to further examine how exactly music based marketing strategies could be developed. Throughout research of various music involving marketing cases (see appendix 2.0), I have identified four crucial pillars that will shape the brand marketing process through music:

1. The extent to which a company is involved in music culture (Scale of Musical Involvement)
2. The approach used in order to become relevant for the audience (Brand Marketing Approach)
3. The identification of an artist or several artists that would be considered suitable for a brand (Artist Choice)
4. Which secondary channels could be used in order to communicate the initiative accordingly (Communication Channels)

The following consists of an analysis of different cases within these fields in order to demonstrate how value could be added to a company’s products or services. At the same time I will critically assess the control a company has over the branding process in order to find out if and how companies could strategically reach marketing goals within the postmodern framework. Due to the complexity of the cultural context of this topic as well as differing goals and strategies of each case, several examples will be mapped out prior drawing conclusions.
SCALE OF MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT

The scale of musical involvement is central to both the credibility of the branding process, and the strength of relevance for an audience. It can either be based on the number of music marketing activities companies are executing or on how much these brands are affiliated with a certain style of music or an artist, which could also be the result of an accidental image ascription via consumers or artists.

The extent to which a company would strategically use music to brand their products can be illustrated through Lusensky’s model of “The music stairway” (2010). He demonstrates this extent through four steps, starting with the unconscious use of music from companies, which would represent step one. This unconscious use could be for instance the music played in a retailer, or the music played for queuing in service hotline that would have been arbitrarily or intuitively chosen by the company.

Step two is where music is becoming a strategic tool, as it on this level would represent values of the brand. It might not contain more elements than step one, but the main difference is the meaningfulness for the brand behind it. Companies might for instance have specific playlists that are played throughout all of their retailers based on the connection of the music compilation to its consumers, or they might even have an own theme song.

Brands that are considered to find themselves on step three are more actively engaged with music through marketing campaigns focusing on that subject or through artist collaborations. Examples would be the hosting of events where brands, music and the consumer intersect, or the use of music ambassadors for a marketing initiative.

Step four would entail the ownership of “a strategic platform in music culture”. Ownership in this context does not necessarily mean physical ownership, but could also indicate the invention of an intangible platform such as music styles. Other than that, the main difference between step three and step four is that, disregarding whether the initiative was brought to live by external parties or not, here the brand is taking the
connection further by becoming the creator of activities and content that is fully dedicated to music.

![The Musical Stairway](image)

Figure 1: The Musical Stairway (Lusensky, 2010)

Converse exemplifies how a brand could take music marketing a step further within this model. Up until roughly three years ago, the company was strategically involved in music culture and thus would find itself on step three. In the Netherlands for instance, Converse would have a pavilion at “Lowlands”, one of the country’s most visited alternative music festivals, in order to support specific artists and at the same time promote the brand through activities such as shoe customization workshops. Due to an increasing amount of similar initiatives by other brands though, Converse’s marketing attempts comparable to the example became less noticeable. In line with Cove et al.’s (2007) thoughts on postmodern consumption communities, Converse CEO Geoff Cottrill explained the decreasing attention of those targeted consumer groups with a shift of how consumers have been becoming more aware of the marketplace and entailing marketing techniques, and emphasized the importance of adding intangible value that would create desire to for purchase products. (see appendix 1.3)

As a response Converse invented a strategic platform in music with the introduction of “Converse Rubber Tracks” in 2011. Converse Rubber Tracks is a Brooklyn based recording studio that offers its services free of charge for evolving artists. (Jurgensen, 2011) To broaden the scope of this initiative, free concerts would be given under the name of “Converse Rubber Tracks presents…” and pop-up recording studios have been
hosting upcoming, local talents worldwide. (Nike Inc., 2014) During the recordings or events, Converse does not promote its products and doesn’t ask for any type of promotion in return – the only brand recognition is given through the name, and occasionally videos of the artists are produced to generate content for the company’s social platforms. (see appendix 1.3)

Disregarding those recent attempts to connect its “All Star” division, which includes the company’s signature Chuck Taylor shoe design, with music culture, Converse originally started up as a company focused on athletic wear. Throughout the 1980’s/90’s however, the shoe started to become an icon for the grunge music scene, as it was seen on influential artists, such as Pearl Jam, Guns N’ Roses or Nirvana. The start and reason of this movement remains here undefined, but due to the original focus of the company, it seems to have occurred rather arbitrarily. Supporting this idea, Tommy Ramone, drummer of The Ramones said regarding Chuck Taylor (the inventor of the shoe): “He was maybe a basketball coach or something. I don’t know. He made cheap shoes.” (Antwood, 2014)

Whether the company sponsored those artists back then or not, what becomes obvious is that without too many marketing efforts, the shoe has become a symbol for a movement in music, which has re-shaped the original brand image and, at the same time created a new type of consumer for the brand, which is still extremely relevant as seen in its current marketing attempt. This incident moreover reflects Cova et al.’s (2007) idea of how market offerings can serve as a linking value for and thus be modified by consumer tribes. Converse has realized the value this “linking value” created for their brand and ultimately built a strategic platform in music upon that.

This incident also entails the question of how much a company can and should actually try to control the branding process through an internally developed music strategy. Postmodern marketing studies would suggest an intent to leave room for the customers’ own interpretation, as the branding value that is ascribed by consumption communities could create a greater bond and make the brand associated with that community more attractive for outsiders by offering a stronger sense of identity. We can also see that Converse, which had already been a music affiliated brand, with its creation of a musical
platform has surely succeeded in promoting the brand among existing customers, but it is questionable what the consequences would have been for a different brand.

HUGO BOSS is another brand that “owns a strategic platform in music” with its “HUGO TRACKS”, a separate division within their online magazine that features stories around mainly semi-established electro(-pop) artists, a very own podcast that is released monthly containing a mix of songs within this genre, and even a very own Twitter page. Furthermore, “HUGO TRACKS” hosted a series of cost-free events within different European cities at niche culture venues, featuring DJ’s that could be identified as popular amongst the usual visitors of those venues. However, even though those events stood out through an extremely high attendance, due to the lack of awareness of “HUGO TRACKS”, most of the attendees were not actually able to draw a relation between the brand and the event experience, and additionally were mostly much too juvenile to actually aspire to purchase Hugo Boss products. Furthermore, social media coverage and follower base of the initiatives is much lower than those of e.g. Converse Rubber Tracks. (see appendix 2.0) It could be that this platform is simply not promoted well enough by the brand, but it seems more likely that there is a lack of connection between customers who would aspire to purchase Hugo Boss and the type of individuals that would consume the offered music initiatives.

After all, a high affiliation with music that could add value to a brand’s product or service scope, as it can create cultural relevance for the customer, and “facilitate meaningful social relationships”. (Cova et al., 2007) However, as previously described, consumers are aware of brand marketing approaches and it is getting increasingly difficult for brand to get noticed, which means that in order to actually intentionally connect with consumers that way, a company will have to fully commit to music involvement in order to establish this relationship with the consumer. Besides supporting the formation of communities, this will also give the brand the opportunity to create an identity around their product offerings and thus to become aspirational. However, the symbol of the music used will have to be related to the existing symbolism of the brand and have to be continuously applied, otherwise, the connection between the brand and music might remain unclear.
Simultaneously, a passiveness in music usage could lead to a high affiliation with music and thus create value for the brand unintentionally. Even though this factor is incontrollable, companies will need to be cautious of it as it could serve as an opportunity to generate a larger customer base.

**BRAND MARKETING APPROACH**

Another dimension that will need to be taken into consideration when exploring the creation of a music-brand-marketing strategy is how a connection between consumer and company could be established through the use of symbolic images. The amount of different approaches in terms of what companies are doing to bring their image across seems to have been on the rise, yet all of those could be categorized into these two groups: The association with an established artist or music culture and the introduction of not yet famous ones.

**Artist & Music Culture Association**

One of the approaches that many companies use aims at connecting with an existing fan base in correlating to an artist’s or a music style’s image and representative values. This would occur through arrangements that often consist of timely limited agreements in which one or several artist(s) would somehow represent the brand and vice versa. Examples would be commercial advertisements starring music artists and artist sponsorships. Usually collaborations would be broadcasted through various media channels or even through mutually created platforms, such as websites or events. (see appendix 2.0)

If we take the broader picture of music culture, the phenomenon of associating a brand with a specific music culture is very common, which is reflected in the idea that consumption tribes are linked through a set of shared consumption patterns. In this case, a marketing goal could be to connect with a wider audience by catering to an existing
community or by facilitating the connection of individuals through items offered within a social framework. Furthermore, association could strengthen the brand identity through the creation of emotional value by putting the brand into a social context. This way it could be encouraging individual purchasing decisions by giving the consumer an opportunity to pursue “social-“ as well as “self-symbolism” (Elliott, 1995).

Probably the most common example of this approach is that of artist liaisons, such as between Rihanna and Swaroski in which the artist was wearing exclusive pieces during several public appearances and in which her name was used for several advertising campaigns. Given that Rihanna had already been affiliated with the fashion industry has given the initiative decent credibility to promote the brand among her artists fan base. However, the problem is that artist liaisons are often timely limited, which mostly leads to promotion, but not to a longer lasting creation of symbolic meaning for the brand.

The complexity of the creation of symbolic meaning in general can be seen in Nike. Besides catering to diverse athletes, it has also found its place within hip-hop music culture, which was especially due to their Air Force One sneaker, worn by various artists and mentions within a number of hip-hop songs. Nevertheless, this does not indicate a sole association with Nike and hip-hop music, as Nike is still associated with athletics on the one hand, and it’s not only the Nike brand, but also other sneaker companies that are associated with the wider framework of hip-hop. (VIMN Insights, 2012) On the one hand this is representative for individual perception and understanding of symbolic meaning, and on the other hand, taken that the brand’s vision is entirely based on inspiring through athletic performance, it serves as another example for how consumers have ascribed non-intended meaning to a company. (see appendix 1.0 & 1.2) Yet, the filling of this component has created a wider consumer range for the company.

An example of a company that has intentionally made use of an association strategy would be Kitsune, which started up its record label at the same time as its fashion brand. Their contracted artists are a mix of French electro and synch-pop, for example La Roux or Digitalism, who seem to be targeted towards the same niche group as their fashion brand. (The GROUND, 2012) On the link between the company’s two entities, co-founder Gildas Loaec says (2014):
“The music artist especially plays a highly inspiring role in terms the way they look, the way the dress and talk and so on. The music artist often establishes himself as a charismatic style influencer. The fans in return, tend to adapt or even copy their personal style to what their musical idol is wearing and try to affiliate and connect with him or her. Music and fashion have also grown together regarding the interaction with their respective audiences.”

Even though the clothing- and the record-label are operated separately for the most part, monthly mixtapes are sold at the brand’s concept stores and online, artists often times serve as brand representatives and being ran under the same name, the components do not only offer a platform for co-branding, but also function as cross-promotional channels during events etc. (Wong, M., 2012)

This practice allows the brand to have a lot of control over its own branding, which is also because record label and its signed artists seem to be equally famous, and of the same size as the fashion brand. Moreover, rather than connecting with an existing music micro-culture or follower base, the company has managed to create its own within the larger framework of the emergence and success of French synth pop groups such as Daft Punk or Ed Banger (Hypetrak, 2014), and thus appears to increase the level of credibility of the brand towards its potential consumers.

Another way to become associated with a musical direction would be the creation of a smaller scale platform, such as an event series. An example would be computer manufacturer Intel, which in 2009 collaborated with lifestyle media company Vice on a music, art and technology series called “The Creator’s Project”. Performers included hip artists such as M.I.A, Florence & The Machine or Mark Ronson, famous among the growing niche community that Vice’s music module has already been catering to, and the festival took place in a number of cities all around the world. Intentions were to create relationships with a younger, and more creative target audience, which entails, as emphasized by Intel’s Creative director David Haroldsen (2011) that "It's all about the experience and aspirational ideas. You can't buy authentic trust and respectability. It's all got to mean something to this audience, or it's not going to work." (Hampp, 2011) By now, the festival series has expanded with an online blog, which features stories and
ideas around creativity and innovation, and a large follower range. This initiative did not only allow Intel to develop emotional value around it, but also made it representative for the creative community that is connected through “The Creators Project”. (Markerly, 2014)

This strategy of becoming representative for a music style appears to be a good example of how brands could become relevant for new consumer groups, or how in postmodern terms it could connect with an existing consumer tribe, or even create a new one. It needs to be taken into consideration though that the image of the brand needs to be entirely coherent with the artist(s). Other than that, the brand would most likely need to commit to the initiative for a longer period of time in order to remain ubiquitous for the intended audience and at the same time the music collaborator would also have to commit to this single brand during that time frame in order to become truly credible. Altogether it appears to be a strategy that requires lots of resources and commitment in order to actually become a success, but could prove as highly value adding, as the brand will naturally become part of the targeted audience’s culture.

**Music Introduction**

Another approach taken by a number of companies is the introduction of not yet established music styles or especially artists. The brand would here come up with a program that features unknown, local artists in order to relate to an audience that shares a common interest in music novelties, the artist groups themselves, or to the potentially already existing local fan bases of those. Most of the time, the artists would be present on the brand’s platforms such as events, websites, TV ads etc. (see appendix 2.0)

Featuring less famous artists would mainly exclude the identification with the image of the artist(s) itself, as it requires to work with less famous identities. However, working with evolving artists could still be highly relevant for the contribution to the brand identity: Upon having identified a general music classification, the brand would here connect with a culture that prefers music novelties over mainstream hits, which represents an identity itself as discussed further in the following chapter. Furthermore, the
brand is able to connect with more local audiences, where the artist(s) might already have an established follower group, and represent an image that locals could further relate to.

A company that commercially employs this strategy is Burberry. Through “Burberry Acoustics” the company has established a base that supports young Indie Brit Pop in gaining success. Within this project, Burberry has been creating music videos of the artists wearing Burberry that will be broadcasted within the brand’s retailers, via its website, as well as social media platforms. This way, the company has not only generated own brand marketing content that would represent their brand culture, but also engaged consumers. At the same time, the bands are selected in house and the videos are shot by Burberry itself, which both offers the company control over the image it should convey. (Pilkington, 2010)

We can look at Converse as another example of a brand that makes use of this approach with differing intents through its “Converse Rubber Tracks”. One significant aspect of this initiative is that Converse does not actually promote the artists on a regular basis but only occasionally through videos via their social channels. On a primary level this reduces the approach to a very limited audience, the artists recording at the studio itself. On a secondary level though, the extremely positive experiences that the opportunity to record an album for free entails, would encourage the participants to further promote the brand locally via word-of-mouth, as well as virtually via social media platforms. This way, the Converse brand is genuinely promoted, as messages are not delivered by the company itself, but by the potential customer. Moreover, the participants are enhancing the company’s brand identity, which is represented in brand values such as “unleashing creativity” and “bringing cultures together”. (see appendix 1.3)

A crucial difference between Converse and Burberry is that Converse leaves the consumers room for their personal interpretation when it comes to the brand image, realizing that it’s not always controllable, and that consumers are aware of the market, and the importance of making consumers a key brand-marketing component. Furthermore, the company has realized the significance of offering experiences that create value for consumers and that markets the brand within the moment of exposure and within a social context. However, leaving the branding and promotion process up to
consumers is less reliable and controllable, which could lead to a depreciation in value when misled.

To conclude, an introductory approach will engage consumers to deliver experiences, and enable the experimenting with different images, which is an important factor for the creation of meaning, as emphasized by Firat and Schultz II (1997). Besides, due to high emotional involvement and positive associations, there it will be more likely that participants will become brand-marketers on a smaller scale, which could be supportive of brand communication goals.

**ARTIST CHOICE**

In order to define how music based marketing could add value to consumer goods, it is crucial to look at what kind of artists or music genres are used by which type of brands. This is closely tied to the brand identity the company is aiming to represent and at the same time what kind of customer it is trying to connect with. Moreover, as taken from previous results, the identity that the company is aiming to represent must be in coherence with and in cultural relevance for the consumer in order to create brand equity and thus value for the “commodity” offering.

Generally spoken, there are two ways in which a company could make decisions on who to work with. First of all, it could look at the music itself, how it’s perceived and what kind of effect it would have on the listener. If we look at music played in retail or in the background of advertisements for instance this seem to be of special importance. Music here ought to relate to its environment in the most natural way or to intensify experiences.

Nike and its Nike + music component is one of the many brands that applies this idea. Nike+ is an smartphone app for athletes that does not only support athletic exercises by e.g. tracking the runners distance, but that also has an option in which the athlete can retrieve playlists created by the brand that are supposed to support his/her activity. The
app has certainly celebrated large success, however, ‘support’ would be a key word when describing the function of music in this one and similar ones. Even though the music might and most likely will be reflecting the brand, it does not capture the full effect that the symbol of the artist/music used in marketing can have, as it taps music, but does not serve as its own channel to connect with music culture. (see appendix 1.0 & 2.0)

Secondly, as previously described, the brand could choose music based on the symbol of the artist or music genre that is supposed to become representative for the brand. As symbolic meaning is not static, so is also the meaning of the artist ever changing, which means that artists to work with can practically not be chosen according to the music genre, in terms of the physical sound they would produce. Therefore to “fit” a brand and to create value for its attributes, the symbolism the artist represents must relate to the already existing image of a brand within its social context, which is reflected in for instance the low relevance of the Hugo Boss case. However, it gives unknown brands with a not yet established image, as well as brands that sell rather basic products with a lower emotional value, such as Intel, the opportunity to create an identity, and it allows established brands to play with opposing identities for the creation off “buzz”. This would implicate extensive research for brand marketing specialists in the realms of what those niche groups are actually listening to, which could be done through for instance ethnographic practices online or offline.

Either way, it will be crucial to identify the cultural context of existing or potential consumers as done by Converse that has realized the potential of their music affiliated consumer base. A similar example would be the pre-existing relevance of sportswear brands for hip-hop culture. Skater wear and lifestyle brand Supreme for instance gained extreme popularity due to the fact that it has been worn by an increased amount of hip hop artists, which has at the same time led to increased credibility among customers. (Williams, 2012) This indicates the importance of brands to identify who their consumer could be, or what they brand would want to stand for and reacting on that existing co-relation, rather than imposing new connections or images to their brand.

To illustrate another significant aspect in who to work with, I will get back to the case of
Converse. Not only does the brand work with evolving artists, but also supports local venues and initiatives, such as funding a formerly shut down night club in London or an independent radio channel that features upcoming DJ’s in Amsterdam. All of these conceptions are linked to local scenes that are described in the interview with a Converse reference as considered ‘hip’. Furthermore, Converse does not only work with local music establishments, but also hosts internationally recognized artists for concerts, and even connects artists for the collaboration of annually released songs under the name of “Three Artists, One Track”. (see appendix 1.3)

Even though their musical roots seem to have come from the alternative/indie/rock musical direction, the different music genres Converse has been representing over the years could almost be considered as arbitrary, considering that those have involved artists such as Trap-pop affiliated Diplo, but also Punk classic The Clash on a global level, or electronic-affiliated Red Light Radio Amsterdam on a local level, to name a few examples. All of this is illustrative for many brands, such as previously described Intel that chose the local and international artists worked with in accordance to Vice Media’s unconventional brand image. This was confirmed during the interview with a Converse marketing affiliate who said that their aim is to work with trendsetting artists that operate on a niche scale. (see appendix 1.3)

This leads to an aspect that occurs to be a central point, proven successful for several companies when it comes to brand marketing through the use of music: The attempt to reach a trendsetting niche community in an authentic way. Analyzing this occurrence from a postmodern standpoint, it could be said that such communities’ linking value consists of the consumption of novel items. As the awareness of the existence of the community increases, outsiders would start making similar consumption choices in order to become part of the tribe. However, with the increasing amount of participators of that community, the original linking value loses its significance and initiators might simultaneously move on to other consumption items that would better represent this pioneering image; an example on how consumption communities and their consumed items are constantly shifting, as described by Goulding et al. (2013). Additionally it can be said that due to its richness in social symbolism and by offering consumers the
exploration of different identities, music is more often imitated than other consumption items.

This phenomenon is further examined in the research of music consumption communities by Nuttall et al. (2010), who identifies two key influential groups: “The Revolutions” and “The Techies”. The revolutionists are characterized through a strong anti-market perspective and a high interest in non-mainstream acts, which often times would be less famous artists, and consider themselves as music knowledgeable even though they are not always concerned with the music production itself. The techies would have more advanced knowledge of music production and a profound knowledge of the record industry. For both groupings music plays a relatively strong role, and both are highly opinionated of this topic, which is why they are usually considered more credible, and will thus also be more influential within music culture.

Whether those type of communities can actually be labeled or not, the study indicates the relevance of innovation and novelties or qualitative acceptance when it comes to the choice of an artist to consider when wanting to relate to an influential target audience. Furthermore it gives an indication on which factors actually make music consumption communities influential, meaning that an increase in followers would be more likely, which could be a great opportunity for brands. The approach of working with less commercial artists, or those that are accepted by music adepts would thus more likely have the effect of consumers facilitating the branding process, but as previously described will need to be in line with the image of the brand.

Either way, through the approach to marketing taken, no formula of choosing the ‘right’ artist can be given. Brands that work with music on a regular basis often times will make use of different classifications of artists, e.g. Converse, depending on the social environment, or even sometimes play with the image of an artist, such Supreme whose campaign for instance featured Lady Gaga, who could be seen as a representative for pop culture. What is most important to understand is what those artists represent, whether they fit into the company’s branding framework, and most importantly to understand cultural trends among the consumers aimed to be catered to. Either way, the story
communicated via the music or the artist will have to be permanently coherent and aligned with the brand values in order to actually gain credibility from the audience.

Altogether, the choice of an appropriate artist for the brand could either support the brand’s identity or shape it through the artists existing image and could additionally create brand equity by creating a linking value between brand and the music consumer. Additionally it can give brands the opportunity to connect with influential communities that would serve as a valuable asset in order to further communicate the brand. While the artist choice will serve mainly branding purposes though, an according communication plan will have to be mapped out to achieve further marketing goals.

**COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

Artists itself will work as its own brand marketing channel as they might not only be seen using or in the proximate environment of the product, but ideally an association with the music and the brand would be created. In order to create this association though, the firm will have to take secondary channels into consideration in which music, brand and consumer intersect.

Within brand communication it can be differentiated between modern and postmodern. Modern communication methods could be considered as, through mostly traditional channels such as TV, Magazines etc., not involving interaction with the consumer. Postmodern communication would, based on the description of the framework seek to engage the consumer in order to create symbolic meaning through experiences or aim at promoting the brand within the moment of exposure to the image. However, traditional communication approaches do not necessarily exclude the involvement of emotions of the consumer, depending on the symbolism used within the advert, but it would lack on opportunity to actually create meaning or linking values, and thus solely serve for the purpose of creating awareness of the brand, or to link the brand to an existing image.
In order to map out the differences and opportunities of each, the following will be based on a categorization identified through the analysis of different cases (see appendix 2.0): “One Way Communication”, a rather modern way of channel usage, “Events” and “Social Media”, which could be thought of as more postmodern. Nevertheless, each of the analyses of channel usage include both modern, as well as postmodern aspect as the involvement of the consumer is hardly measurable, and e.g. even though consumers might be participating in an event, the communication might still occur on a rather passive level.

**One Way Communication**

There are plenty of approaches in which a one way communication occurs to support the previously described approaches. The most common channels for those would be print and digital media, TV or radio. Most of those involve the collaboration with one or several artists who act as brand ambassador(s) through either advertising campaigns or artist sponsorship. In the latter case however, it is in most cases difficult to distinguish between sponsorship and actually intended consumption of the artist, which makes this a much more credible and value adding approach.

The actual or sponsored use of the product or service by the artist is could be identified as the most significant for one way brand communication involving music. The continuous usage of a specific brand by an artist or several artists representative for a music micro-culture that would be seen through various media channels and/or even concerts could cause an association, and therefore make the brand socially relevant and more desirable. Supreme would be an example of how value can be added to the product through its use of several artists.
Events

Another channel related to music would an event such as a concert or a festival. Sponsoring of those has become one of the most common ways of brand communication that aims at creating a positive association with brands. At music festivals for instance, almost every stage is sponsored by a brand and additionally, many brands would have an own promotional stand. Another really common activity for brands is to host events themselves, such as for instance the launch of new products and such.

Events are an opportunity to co-create value for attendees, as well as for the artist itself. Music can serve here as linking value between participating parties that have often times already been virtually connected through shared interest in this music. On top of that, the connection could become even stronger in cases where attendees would reconnect afterwards on commonly liked artists (Nuttall, Arnold, Carless, Crockford, Finnamore, Frzier & Hill, 2010). However, event hosting as well as sponsoring has become so common that it is increasingly difficult for brands to actually become memorable, which means that a marketing effective event would mostly require brand exclusivity, and the delivery of a platform that is either different to the regular event model or especially attractive for a specific community in order to create an outstanding experience.

Social Media

Digital communities are amongst the most important channels in communicating the collaboration of music and brand. The communication could originate from either the brand itself, from the artist or from the consumer and offers the opportunity of those to interact, which means that it facilitates the creation of and contribution to virtually connected consumption tribes.

In many of the cases in which the company would own a strategic platform in music, this platform would also be supported through social media channels separate to the brand’s own social media profiles, which could trigger increased awareness to the brand of a new audience. Soundcloud for instance offers individuals the opportunity to connect solely
based on songs posted through public profiles, which means that the likeliness of gaining new followers when posting content enjoyed by the addressed community is high.

Most importantly though, it offers brands the opportunity to create value through engagement and conversations with the consumer utilizing the symbol of the artist. This could be triggered by the brand, the artist or the consumer itself, but the most valuable branding content seems to be generated by the two latter ones as they could already be considered part of the given consumption tribe. Additional to this mutual value creation, it is also a way to promote the brand amongst a wider audience.

Social media channels are mostly used solely to support the other channels, however, as described by Nike and Converse marketing professionals, are amongst the most effective communication tools. Content though is not entirely controllable by the brand, which is why more and more companies are using especially their physical platforms to trigger social media coverage from consumers.

The bottom line is that the most successful brand communication strategies involving music will be based on a thought through use of multiple channels. Ideally those would locally connect communities and triggering shared emotions, which would lead to a further promotion and continuous value creation in the post consumption process through sharing experiences on online platforms or via word-of-mouth. However, one way communication can still be effective as a reminder of the brand image.

Red Bull’s “Music Academy” would be the best example to illustrate the effectiveness of multi-channelling. The music platform’s channel mix consists of an annual event series, a promotional website, an online magazine, an actual radio station, seven social media accounts and print advertisements published as posters and in magazines prior to the event. By working with suitable of niche artists, offering workshops and publishing editorial content within their digital channels, the company was able to establish one of the largest social follower bases within this music brand marketing framework, and at the same time has become a much discussed topic on these channels, resulting in an extremely high exposure of the brand to the consumer it is aiming to address.
After all though, companies will not have to map out such extensive multi-channel plan, as what seems most important is to connect communities within a strong, coherent and socially relevant, symbolic context as, the higher the emotional and experienced impact for the participant within the moment of exposure, the more likely the word of the brand will spread. Communication could also occur on a smaller scale, especially for niche brands, as long as the right audience is involved with a relating artist. And after all the impact of the artist via his/her/their social or other channels itself is another aspect that could have a large impact.
CONCLUSION

Concluding it can be said that a universal approach that creates value for a brand’s product or service scope through brand marketing can not be outlined, as all of the cultural circumstances surrounding the brand will have to be taken into account. As the research implies a consumer oriented market place, emphasis is to be put on the socio-cultural research that will have to be conducted when mapping out a marketing plan. The following aspects will need to be taken into consideration:

Scale of Musical Involvement:

If the goal is to not only temporarily promote the brand through music, but to build up a consistent customer base, companies should strive at owning a strategic platform in music that would continuously offer specific linking images. Social trend cautiousness will here be the key to remain relevant for the community that the brand caters to.

Brand Marketing Approach:

A company could either aim at becoming associated with the existing image of an artist, or introduce new music. A successful implementation of an association strategy could create brand equity among consumers, but also incorporates long-term commitment and an increased emphasis of the right artist and communication channel selection in order to actually stand out. An introductory approach will more naturally enable promotion among participating consumer tribes, but leaves the company less control over the branding process.

Artist Choice:

Prior to defining which artist to work with, a company will have to find out which symbolic image it represents among customers, and how strong this image is perceived. If the existing emotional value attached to the brand is rather low, a company will have more freedom when it comes to the artist choice, otherwise a selection of artists that is in line with the cultural associations made with the brand is crucial in order to become
credible. Working with niche artists could potentially lead to a trending adoption of the consumption by followers and it is especially important to find out which artists are especially popular among a consumption community at that specific point in time. At the same time it is crucial to keep current with trends within the music culture the company would find itself in as its underlying constant changes.

**Communication Channels:**

To increase the awareness of the initiative, companies should map out a multi-channel plan that communicates the collaboration extensively. In order to create emotional value for the brand, interaction with consumer groups is required either virtually through social media platforms or events. Companies will here have to find out which platforms the communities usually use to connect, and furthermore what kind of initiatives they could offer that deliver outstanding and likeable experiences.

Additionally the following implications can be extracted from the analysis in regards to using music as a brand-marketing tool:

- The music consumption communities that are involved in the marketing approach do not necessarily have to be considered the final customers. Especially when concluding from the existing examples, initiatives involving interaction with the consumer seem be more measurable against brand communication goals. However, there needs to be a link between product or service offering and the end consumer, so that those are able to draw relations.

- A severe brand image change through working with music marketing seems to be rather difficult to implement as it will imply a mix of different symbols and obstruct the connection between brand and artists. However, depending on the follower base of the brands can experiment and play with different images through working with different artists.

- A music marketing approach could be of use for any company that offers products or services that can be put in a social context. What those are again depends on the context, and what would be considered or have the potential of becoming a “lifestyle product”. Recent trends can be seen in computer brands.
for instance: Apple was a pioneer in not only sell functionality, but also a fashionable identity, which has given the company a high advantage over its competition. Both Intel and Microsoft have been making use of brand marketing through music, which speaks for a recognition of the high potential of creating emotional value. At the same time it shows the benefits such approach entails especially for brands that sell non-social consumption items.
1.0 Interview: Nike PR/Communications Manager:

March 31st, 2014

Which are currently your most important media channels for Nike?

Most important right now are online channels, such as e-mag’s and blogs. Of course print coverage is always nice to have, but online content will in general be visible to a wider audience.

Considering that Nike is a very diversely worn brand, what kind of audience are you trying to reach and through what type of editorial content?

In general our goal is to get as much coverage as possible. However, Nike is an athletic performance based brand, so our main objective is to reach an audience that shares this interest in sports. Of course it is nice to see how Nike shoes are also worn as a fashion item, and we are also happy to see more and more coverage from fashion publications, but those are not our main focus.

Can you exemplify a project that you have led recently?

We have invited two girls that run a local blog centered around running and a healthy lifestyle to an exclusive, one day event that included personal training sessions, dining and the stay at a hotel. As a result they published great stories about us on their blog afterwards!

What kind of stories would you be pitching to the media?

Most of the time the stories we pitch would be about innovative features of new products, and how the athlete will benefit from those, e.g. the flyknit technology.2

Do you also work with events? What type of events?

2 http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/partner-zone-nike1
Yes, Nike events crucial for media coverage. The events are usually either sports events organized by Nike, with e.g. “We own the night”\(^3\) as one of the biggest ones, or sports events sponsored by Nike.

\(^3\) [http://www.nike.com/nl/en_gb/c/running/we-own-the-night](http://www.nike.com/nl/en_gb/c/running/we-own-the-night)
1.2 Interview: Nike Brand Communication Director

February 18th, 2014

How is the brand communications department set up and what kind of Europe specific tasks does it fulfill?

The marketing department at Nike’s European Headquarters is divided geographically, and furthermore by category (Nike Running, Football, Basketball, SB, Training and Sportswear). The marketing strategy is aligned with the global strategy under the vision to “bring inspiration to every athlete in the world*”.

The marketing strategy is category oriented/specific.

*If you have a body, you’re an athlete

Has the way you approach consumers changed over the past 10 years? How? [Hinting at an increased amount of e.g. social media involvement; from large scale/top-down branding to higher consumer involvement]4

It’s not necessarily the approach that has changed, but more the tools we are now able to use that have changed. The brand message we are aiming to deliver is still the same (see above). Through these new tools such as social media we are now able to connect individuals that share a common interest and passion. Of course, this way also enables us to create more interactive relationships with our consumers. A great example of this would be the “Play Russian” campaign. (“Play Russian” was a local campaign around the Winter Sports Olympics 2014, in which a series events centered around running, football, snowboarding and ice hockey took place for free participation of Russian athletes (“If you have a body you’re an athlete”). During these events, participants were encouraged to submit videos and imagery using #playrussian via social media platforms, which were then elevated to Nike’s “digital hub”, which served itself as a social platform]5

What are currently the most important tools you use to market the brand?

4 http://www.fluffylinks.com/nike-digital-marketing
Stores
Athletes
Paid media
Digital media
Social communities

The tools used depend on the messages that is aimed to be communicated.

**How do you identify targeted consumer groups and how has this changed over the last years?**

By sports category/athletic affinity, as well as by demographics (gender, age group etc.). What has changed over the years, is that we are now more category focused.

**Are you involved in any marketing activities that focus on music?**

Generally, Nike as a brand is solely based on driving athlete’s performance, which excludes any intentional music/lifestyle integrations. There are initiatives such as Nike+\(^6\) that focus on music [that’s provided to runners through an app], but those come from the global team.

I was able to choose the music for the Play Russian campaign, and every once in a while I am involved in similar type of projects.

**How did you decide on which song to use for the campaign?**

I did a lot of research to find a song that would really match the theme of the campaign. The final decision was based on feeling and intuition on what would suit best.

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1.3 Interview: Converse Marketing Operations Lead EMEA (used to work in event marketing until 2 years ago)

March 18, 2014

L.: Basically, my bachelor thesis is about the paradigm shift in what defines marketing, in consumption choices are rather based on irrationality and emotions, which make branding, selling images and experiences more relevant. Even though this is not necessarily a new phenomenon, I chose to relate it to ‘music branding’/how brands incorporate music in their marketing strategy, as there has been an explosion of different approaches by the most various brands...

J.: There is also a shift in what music marketing/branding approaches used to be. They used to be way more based on not much more than sponsorship. Taking Converse for instance, around five years ago we used to have a tent at Lowlands where we supported different artists and offered different activities, such as ‘Customize you All Stars”. After a while however it started getting boring for visitors, as they started getting used to the tent just being there, and it didn’t really serve its purpose of offering them a fun brand experience anymore. We also already had other events, such as local music contests for instance, but at some point none of those were really working anymore and we realized we had to come up with a new strategy to approach our customers.

What our CEO Geoff [...] pointed out back then is that we have to start listening to the consumer. The consumer is becoming smart and more and more aware of the marketplace and don’t care about logos and banners anymore, but instead need some kind of added value to their products.

At that point something entirely new in terms of music marketing was created with the goal to be more useful and to create value for consumers, the “Converse Rubber Tracks” recording studio. Even though it’s extremely, Converse never asked for anything in return from the users. The only reason behind it is to provide young artists a platform to unleash their talents. As a consequence, people talk about it, especially virally. What we do in terms of campaigning are occasional videos about specific groups, which we would publish though our social media channels.

In Europe we are currently trying to implement something similar for key markets. We would live to do something cool with the music community that’s different and USEFUL. Useful, by the way, is essential in this context, as it is one of our main brand drivers.

In London for instance we have the ‘100 Club’. This used to be a club that was said to be ‘legendary’, but a couple of years ago it needed to shut down. Converse took an initiative by
funding this club and offering the former owners to re-invent it – we left everything entirely up to them. Converse doesn’t brand itself through the club at all. We only out our logo on event invites sometimes, and also through Converse’s own social channels.

In Amsterdam we sometimes work with Red Light Radio.

[Knowing Red Light Radio quite well, but never heard of any collaboration with Converse] Oh Really? I never knew... So you really don’t brand the project a lot at all?

No, really only to the minimum. We’ve had a lot of internal discussions around how much Converse should show itself. Sometimes we combine show launch parties with after parties at Red Light Radio, where Converse would be promoted a little bit more openly, but other than that we’re just supporting them mainly financially and sometimes add our name to show names.

So I guess you’re trying to speak mainly to the people who actually involved in those events/etc. rather than to the wider audience with those initiatives?

Yes, exactly. The goal here is for the people who are involved to market the Converse brand and create buzz virally. Everything is happening through social these days, especially as it offers us an entirely new and more interactive way to speak to our audience. Converse is present on all social platforms including of course Facebook, Instagram etc., and even Vine if you know that one?

Yes – really cool! So I understand social media are prioritized channels when it comes to marketing the Converse brand?

Yes, so social platforms would be the most important channels used for us at the moment. In fact, we have the third largest only community in the world!!

So to come back to the music initiatives, even though those are all really expensive, but throughout the Converse strategy, they represent a new way of thinking in order to create a better brand for the future.

So what kind of customer segments is Converse trying to approach? Are the people involved in the music initiatives the main audience, or...?

No we don’t target the main consumer with those.
We actually divide the consumers we target into ‘All Stars’ and ‘Cons’. All Star is of course our classic model, while Cons involves more street culture, like skaters etc. Within the All Star segment, we have two main consumer groups, the “Core Creatives” and the “Creative Connectors”. “Core Creatives” would be trendsetters, the niche, the people that others might look up to, while Connectors are rather mass consumers and individuals who follow the trend. We see the most potential though in the “Core Creatives” because they set trends will therefore be very influential on the market. At the same time those will also be really into music, which means that if Converse is trying to do something that is not really authentic they would also notice it first. So we are trying to relate to those in a meaningful way and try to be as credible as possible at all times.

[Started talking about how Hugo Boss had a party at Trouw, which seemed really random because Trouw has a completely different audience + no one actually knew that the party was initiated by Hugo Boss->seems like not very successful and both agreed]

So this actually reminds me of a thought that came to me during my research, which is that it seems that trendsetters in fashion are also often times trendsetters in music, and that they are not really defined by music genre, but more by listening to music that is somehow new/innovative and hip...It seems like Converse is kind of picking up on that when considering the diversity of artists/genres they have worked with, as in for instance “three artists, one track”?

Yeah, Converse is actually trying to move away from the standard alternative/rock scene that it used to be associated with, and is indeed trying to work with trendsetting artists, often times on a niche scale.

Speaking of “three artists, one track”, those are always a disaster internally....It can be really tricky to bring some of those artists together. In our last one for instance we had diplo who didn’t want to work with a number of other artists and so on and so on...

I see...How do you spread the ‘three artists, one track’ videos actually? I don’t remember how I became aware of them, but they are neither played on TV, nor on the radio, right?

Right, so we mainly communicate them via our social channels, and our excellent PR team is working very closely with the different territories to get them into the right PR channels. This way they promoted widely through social channels and digitally in general.
So what would be Converse’s image it’s trying to sell/brand values?

Hmm… As pointed out before, being useful would be at the moment the most important brand value. Another one would be that we’re trying to bring cultures together. We really want to offer a platform for our target consumers.

How do you measure the success of music initiatives like Converse Rubber Tracks?

Of course it’s hard to make those tangible but the main goal is to create an image and to connect with the consumers. We measure this by looking at the media and how Converse is portrayed here. Additionally we look at how consumers and music artists respond to it. This actually reminds me of another brand value of ours, which is to “unleash creativity”, which is what we’re trying to do here.

Alright...so, to get back to where our conversation started – are there any other music initiative Converse is doing here in Europe??

In France for example we offer a music platform in an old Parisian nightclubs, with weekly gigs. Those also always generate a lot of social content, and we often times create videos for our platforms.

In Barcelona we work with “Make Noise”, a festival and event series....

So your strategy is to focus on key cities within Europe?

Yes, definitely key cities! We’re actually trying to bring a “Converse Rubber Tracks” studio to Europe right now. The exact location is still under discussion, but it’s most likely going to be Berlin.

[Ended up talking about how Berlin is one the hippest cities in Europe right now and a hub for young creative and hyped...]

Converse shoes, especially the All Star, are items that seem very timeless and as worn by an extremely large diversity of people. Even Obama wore them! Where is actually the ink between the brand and the product?
With our brand we’re trying to create something our consumer groups can context to. In fact we’re actually doing very extensive research on who our consumer groups are, and going from there we would build out our brand strategy.

Our product is definitely rather classic. They do undergo changes though, like for instance we always try to work with different materials, colors, and slight changes in form. Both, brand and product is based on our consumer though.

**Last question – how do you choose the music genre or artists you would be working with?**

This really depends on the type of event etc. Of course it’s relevant what kind of people we expect to attend, or are aiming at addressing, and also on what kind of music genre we’re trying to bring across. Based on that we would be trying to find artists that fit into the certain profile internationally. Let’s say for instance we would host an event in Amsterdam, where we would try to connect with local influencers and trendsetters, we would also choose to work with local artists, because it clearly wouldn’t make sense to pay huge amounts of money for big names, which are often times overrated. Local names would have a much greater impact in this context to connect with the desired target audience.
### Appendix 2.0: Music as a Brand Marketing Tool: Collection of Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Physical Presence</th>
<th>Digital Media</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Physical Media (Magazines/TV)</th>
<th>Suggested General Approach/Target/UK acquisition</th>
<th>Type of Music</th>
<th>Popular</th>
<th>Unique/Popularity Rise</th>
<th>Relevance in UK Sales %</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Editorial content solely devoted to music</td>
<td>E-Mag</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect with niche markets?</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Creation of podcast</td>
<td>Soundcloud</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect with niche markets?</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
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<td>Twitter</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect with niche markets?</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Podcast</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Connect with niche markets?</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Event hosting/concert</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect with niche markets?</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High attendance, but low awareness of brand sponsor; young audience (18-23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>E-Mag</td>
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<td>Acoustic</td>
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<td>Production of music album</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burberry</td>
<td>Songs released/presented exclusively by brand</td>
<td>YouTube</td>
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<td>Soundcloud</td>
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<td>Engage customer/one useful/one connect with core creatives</td>
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<td>Engage customer/one useful/one connect with core creatives</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel</td>
<td>Award &amp; healing</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Become lifestyle brand</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bull</td>
<td>Record label</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Become lifestyle brand</td>
<td>Electro</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70K sourcecloud followers; 200K Facebook likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bull</td>
<td>Event series</td>
<td>Club/Concert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Become lifestyle brand</td>
<td>Electro</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bull</td>
<td>Workshop hearing</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Become lifestyle brand</td>
<td>Electro</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Relevance = 1=irrelevant/10=high relevance; based on participant observation, social media follower base, (social) media coverage, further primary & secondary sources of information(e.g. conversations, articles etc.), amount of initiatives, extent of initiatives, cultural involvement*
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TABLES